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Keynote Address
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"Raised on Rock 'n Roll – The Sound and The Fury"

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This keynote address should make it clear to the user that the Surgeon General's life is a very varied one and that health extends into places you might not imagine at first glance. This conference was a response to a growing feeling on the part of many people that child pornography, sexually explicit television shows and fiction, and any other aspects of the entertainment world were getting the wrong message across to our children. This was not a political move. Two of the movers and shakers were on opposite sides of the aisle politically, Susan Baker, wife of James Baker, and Tipper Gore, wife of the Vice President.

The conference was sponsored by the Parent's Music Resource Center, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Mental Health Association, the National Youth Suicide Center, and the American Academy of Child Psychiatry. All were major hitters in the field of health and medicine.

I began by saying that we were confronting a number of issues, which attest of our faith as citizens, concerned professionals, and human beings. It was interesting to me that in their advanced literature advertising this symposium, they used a quote of mine from a previous address on pornography, which went this way: "Society has become much more concerned about the way pornography has begun to invade both our public and our private lives. At one time, the public's concern was focused almost exclusively upon bookstores and movie theaters that specialized in pornography. But today's hucksters of pornography have invaded cable television, the world of popular music, telephone communications, and the whole new field of home video recorders."

I made it clear that we were not dealing with a passing incident with pornography – about one magazine, one play, or one film. We are dealing with a general tendency that is pervading the entire culture, including the culture known to very young children. I mentioned that we now had rock videos without control and frequently viewed without parents even being aware. Many that I have seen personally are senseless violence with senseless pornography to the beat of rock music.

Then, I went on to describe the report that I had prepared, at the request of the Attorney General, on pornography in children. I will not repeat any of that here, because it has been covered in previous lectures on the issue of pornography.

Leaving pornography aside, I then turned to the kind of sex one sees without responsibility and without morality on both TV and in the movies. I mentioned the work done at the Michigan State University and the frequency with which unmarried sexual intercourse is depicted, and gave statistics on the number of hours children of various ages watch television that is likely to help bolster these statistics.

I turned to the question of AIDS and had pointed out that much of my life over the last year was dealing with this issue and that I often had said that morality and science go hand-in-hand in the prevention of AIDS. I then, went on to tell of my experience with the media and how positive it was.

I told of my trip to California to meet with representatives of the television entertainment industry, how I had reviewed shows such as "An Early Frost", "An Enemy Among Us", and episodes of "L.A. Law", and "St. Elsewhere". It was clear to me that television has the ability to present AIDS issues in an informing, moving, and sensitive way.

As I have frequently said about the press, I repeated about the television industry: they had done a superb job of getting the basic facts of AIDS to the American people; in fact, Columbia University found that, between June 1983 and August 1986 the percentage of the population who said they had heard or read about AIDS increased from 77 to 90 per cent.

After my visit to Hollywood, those who measure such things informed me that writers and producers were taking the sexual content of their programs into consideration relative to AIDS. And I understood from them that movie and TV characters would be responding to the AIDS issue. Surveys indicated that there had been a marked swing away from frequent casual sex with many different partners for both heterosexuals and homosexuals and toward low risk sexual relations with one partner...monogamy.

I went on with a more philosophical vein and said that what we learned, we had to re-learn and that there was much more to human relationships than just "good sex". Sexuality is just one aspect of human relationships, it's something...but it's not everything. This was a very pertinent message in the age of AIDS.

One aspect of sexuality in the age of AIDS can be either life-giving or death-giving. We can hope that young people who are or are becoming sexually active have a heightened awareness of who they are...how they care about themselves...and how they care about others. In such relationships there will most definitely be sex, but it will be sex without exploitation, domination and fear, syphilis, gonorrhea and guilt, and sex without AIDS.

I cited certain television shows like "the Cosby Show", "Cagney and Lacey", "the Golden Girls" and such films such as "Roxanne", "La Bamba", and the "Living Daylights", as examples of

caring relationships built right into the shows. The best show on AIDS I had seen was an episode of CBS's "Designing Women".

I made it clear once again, that although at the time, I did not see an explosion of heterosexual transmission of AIDS, such as we had seen with homosexual and bisexual men in 1981 and 1982, it did not reduce the individual risk to those who practice high-risk sexual behavior.

Because of the number of television shows, movies cited, etc., there will be no index.